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A Way Forward

A Progressive Vision for Reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Jeremy Ayers and Cynthia Brown

With Ulrich Boser, Raegen Miller, and Theodora Chang

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Introduction and executive summary

Congress has the opportunity to move forward on education reform by reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or ESEA, to ensure all children achieve their greatest potential. Unfortunately, it has yet to find the will to do so, to the detriment of our nation's students and schools.

ESEA is the largest and most significant federal education law supporting public schools. ESEA, currently known as No Child Left Behind, was due to be reauthorized in 2007. Congress has the opportunity to fix numerous flaws in NCLB and to build on positive change due to new, innovative programs already underway in many places. Political events and calculations, however, threaten to stymie the law's renewal.

This paper outlines a smart, progressive vision for moving forward with the reauthorization of ESEA. The stakes are high, both for our nation's students and our economic growth and competitiveness. Raising achievement levels in the United States to those of other industrialized nations could increase our GDP by trillions of dollars.

Following core principles of federal education policy, we propose significant policy changes on topics such as teachers and principals, funding, school improvement, and innovation. There are many important issues that impact schools and students in a large, complex law such as ESEA, and an astute reader will notice, we have not addressed all of them. We focused our recommendations on those topics we think are critical to advancing progressive education goals.

Specifically, we recommend:

- Holding all schools accountable for getting results with all students
- Investing in teachers and principals so they become more skilled and effective
- Making funding practices more fair and efficient so every student gets a fair shot at having an effective teacher and adequate resources

- Targeting support to low-performing schools, including expanding learning time and providing nonacademic services that meet all student needs
- Investing in innovative practices that bring American schools into the 21st century

We recognize our approach runs contrary to many on the far right who have embraced a cut-and-run strategy—gut education funding and scale back federal involvement in education. We believe this to be an approach that shirks federal responsibility in exchange for a cheap return to greater state and local control, and likely inaction on education reform.

Instead, we believe strongly in the federal government’s role in promoting equity and opportunity, high standards and strong outcomes, and efficient use of public funds. We believe a forward-looking, forward-moving federal government can leverage its relatively modest contribution to education budgets to spur reform and economic growth.

Therefore, we call for a smart, progressive approach to improving education. Through targeted programs like Race to the Top, or RTT, the federal government was able to encourage significant reform at the state level. Thirty-four states amended or passed education laws before RTT money was awarded, demonstrating that federal law can be both lean and effective at fostering change. We believe Congress can apply such a strategy to the reauthorization of ESEA, not only in authorizing competitive programs like RTT but also in asking states to engage in reform in exchange for federal dollars.

The next steps for Congress regarding ESEA are about policy but also about politics. Both chambers must find consensus on issues such as accountability, teacher effectiveness, and funding. Equally critical, they must become willing to work in a bipartisan way, as they did in passing No Child Left Behind. In the end, what hangs in the balance is not a particular poll or election but the economic and social well-being of our nation.

As Congress rolls up its sleeves and gets serious about reauthorization, we stand ready to work with them. We urge Congress to revise ESEA not in a timid way, but in a bold and progressive way.

What is ESEA?

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, or ESEA, is the largest federal education law in the United States. Federal money only makes up roughly 10 percent of total public school funding; most funds and, thus, leverage come from states and school districts. Yet ESEA touches every aspect of American schools including standards and testing, qualifications for becoming a teacher, strategies for turning around low-performing schools, and how schools with low-income students get funded. Thus, ESEA is a significant federal lever for improving U.S. schools.

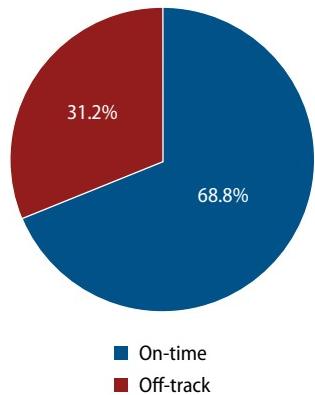
ESEA is slated to be renewed every five years, and it was last reauthorized in 2002 when it was renamed No Child Left Behind, or NCLB. Although the law was supposed to be revised again in 2007, a series of events has led to delay.

Congress has the opportunity with each passing year to fix the existing flaws in current law and even to accelerate positive change underway in many places. President Barack Obama called on Congress in March to reauthorize ESEA this year. Political challenges and calculations, however, threaten to stall the law's renewal once again.

We believe Congress cannot wait to act because the public education system can and must dramatically improve. Currently, only 35 percent of eighth graders read at grade level.¹ Most high schools graduate little more than two-thirds of their students on time, and only one-fourth of these graduates are prepared for college.² In fact, about one-third of first-year college students need to take a remedial class.³ Worse yet, low-income and minority students fare worse, sometimes far worse, than their peers on every indicator of achievement.

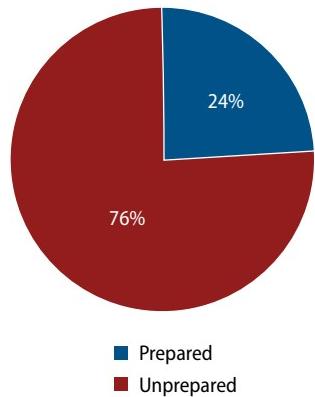
Meanwhile, educators have learned important lessons from research on effective practices and policies in schools, as well as from implementation of NCLB over the last nine years. The recommendations we offer below derive from research evidence and good practice that point a way forward for education reform.

U.S. graduation rate



Source: "Diplomas Count 2010: Graduating by the Numbers: Putting Data to Work for Student Success," *Education Week*, June 10, 2010.

College readiness rate



Source: ACT, "The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2010" (2010).

Why is ESEA important?

Polls consistently show most Americans believe their local school is doing fine and that problems reside in schools located elsewhere.⁴ We can no longer afford to indulge in the myth that every school is okay. Significant action is needed to combat widespread low student achievement, large gaps between disadvantaged and more advantaged students, and lost economic opportunity due to poor educational outcomes.

.....
Education is crucial to building a strong middle class and growing the economy.

The United States spent an estimated \$5.6 billion in the 2007-08 school year remediating students in college for what they should have learned in school.⁵

YET

Reducing the nation's dropout rate by half in 2010 would add \$5.6 billion in increased spending, \$19 billion in increased home sales, 54,000 new jobs, \$9.6 billion in economic growth, and \$713 million in increased tax revenue.⁶

.....
Education is critical to maintaining international competitiveness.

American 15-year-olds in 2009 placed 17th in reading and 25th in math compared to their peers in other industrialized countries.⁷

YET

Raising achievement levels in the United States to those of other industrialized nations from 1983–1998 would have increased our GDP in 2008 by \$1.3 trillion to \$2.3 trillion.⁸

Education is key to promoting equity and opportunity.

Only 14 percent of African American eighth graders, 18 percent of Hispanic eighth graders, and 23 percent of Native American eighth graders read at grade level compared to 45 percent of their white peers.⁹

YET

Raising the high school and college graduation rates of Hispanic, African American, and Native American students to the levels of white students by 2020 could lead to a potential increase in personal income that would add more than \$310 billion to the U.S. economy.¹⁰

Why hasn't ESEA been reauthorized?

Moving forward to improve schools and raise student achievement will require significant reform. Yet we recognize not everyone shares our view. There are some members of Congress and the public who have embraced a cut-and-run strategy that has complicated the prospects for reauthorizing ESEA.

They advocate for cutting programs and drastically reducing the federal investment in education.¹¹ We disagree. We believe now is the time to invest more in our children's education in order to accelerate economic recovery, grow the middle class, and enable graduates to compete for jobs with their international peers.

They argue the federal government has little to no business in education.¹² We disagree. We believe the federal government has played a vital role in ensuring disadvantaged students get a fair shot. And we believe it should continue to play a smart role in encouraging (not micromanaging) reform.

They argue students have made little progress while federal spending has increased.¹³ We disagree. We know achievement gaps have closed when standards and expectations were high and when sufficient resources were available.¹⁴

They are ready to cut and run. We are ready to move ahead with a progressive vision for change.

Two competing visions

What is the role of the federal government in education?

Cut and run	Smart and progressive
Cut education spending.	Increase investment in education to grow the economy and the middle class.
Roll back federal involvement and leave education up to states and districts.	Leverage federal involvement to ensure equity and to encourage change.
Loosen federal requirements because increased spending has not yielded results.	Implement targeted federal reforms because smart action has yielded results.

What is the federal role in education? The Five E's

Our proposal does not urge the federal government to take on primary responsibility for schools. That is the job of states, school districts, and ultimately teachers, principals, and parents. But our plan is progressive in that it calls on the federal government to play a leading role in the Five E's: equity, enhancing opportunity, effectiveness, efficiency, and encouraging innovation. These are fundamental principles that have guided federal involvement in education in the past and are crucial to moving forward into the future.

Equity. The federal government has played a vital role in ensuring students have equal access to a quality education since the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Ensuring equity continues to be important when achievement gaps remain unacceptably large. The federal government cannot shirk its responsibility to low-income and minority students.

Enhancing opportunity. From the G.I. Bill to Pell Grants, from Head Start to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the federal government has sought to increase the educational opportunities of our population. In particular, investments in higher education have made the United States a magnet for international students. The federal government has proudly opened doors for children and adults previously shut out, and Congress should not walk away from continuing to play this role.

Effectiveness. NCLB has numerous flaws but one goal is right on target—ensuring all students reach high standards and documenting outcomes for groups of students through publicly reported data. That was a major step forward, and Congress should not retreat. Our nation's economic growth and recovery depend upon a well-educated, highly skilled population that can compete with our international peers.

Efficiency. The economic recession and rapidly shrinking state budgets have brought the issue of productivity into clear focus. How much do schools accomplish in proportion to what they spend? Are our tax dollars being spent efficiently? These are hard questions that deserve answers, especially when some, like us, argue for increased investment in education. Therefore, the federal government has a role to play in encouraging productive uses of public money.

Encouraging innovation. The federal government has long been a supporter of research and an incubator of innovation. The National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation are but two examples. Since education is a key driver of economic growth, Congress should continue to fund successful education innovation ventures such as Race to the Top, Investing in Innovation, and the Teacher Incentive Fund.

Why should Congress reauthorize ESEA now?

The nation would greatly benefit from a more progressive federal education law. Our proposal calls for smart investments in innovation, targeted action to improve teachers and schools, strong accountability, and vigorous oversight to ensure low-income students get their fair share of resources. Specifically, we believe a progressive vision for reauthorizing ESEA should ensure the following:

Every student reaches high standards. High-performing schools—even those with significant challenges such as poverty—succeed by setting high expectations for all students and accepting no excuses for persistent failure. Our plan would hold all schools accountable for ensuring all students achieve college- and career-ready standards.

Every student has a teacher and principal who is effective at helping them learn. Schools have unprecedented student learning data at their fingertips. Our plan would direct schools to use that data, in fair and comprehensive ways, to measure and improve how effective teachers and principals are at improving student achievement.

The danger of the status quo

Why we should reauthorize ESEA

If we reauthorize	If we don't reauthorize
Struggling students in low-performing schools would get help to improve.	The number of struggling schools will continue to increase, and they will be forced to implement improvement strategies that don't work.
Students would benefit from more effective teachers and principals.	Students will continue to have teachers who are not as effective as they need to be at helping them learn.
Students would get their fair share of resources and effective teachers.	Many students will continue to receive fewer resources and the worst teachers.
Economic growth would accelerate, driven by a better-educated, more competitive workforce.	The status quo will persist with inadequate student achievement and lost economic opportunity.

Every student gets a fair share of resources. Federal education law is designed to ensure poor students get extra resources because they face extra challenges. Our plan would ensure inequitable funding practices are reversed and that poor and minority students have equal access to effective teachers.

Every school receives support to improve. No school is perfect, and some schools chronically struggle to help all students achieve. Our plan would ensure low-performing schools get the data, time, staff, and support they need to turn academic achievement around.

Every state and district spends its tax dollars efficiently and innovatively. Like all institutions, schools can get stuck doing the same thing over and over again, with no improvement. Our plan would encourage states and districts to invest in innovative practices, and it would track the “bang” schools get for their “buck” so tax dollars are spent productively.¹⁵

What will happen if Congress fails to revise ESEA?

Congress faces the daunting task of revising ESEA in a politically divisive climate. Forces on the far right and far left have joined in an uncommon alliance to reduce accountability. Some in the center are even cynical about the federal role in education. Combined, these dynamics have tempted many to embrace the timid option of preferring the devil they know—that is, the current law—to the one they don’t.

The stakes are too high to do nothing. A quick look at NCLB, as it stands, is enough to demonstrate that failing to reauthorize ESEA will be detrimental to students. If Congress does not act now:

- **The number of schools identified as low performing will skyrocket, and schools will be forced to implement improvement strategies that don't work.** NCLB requires districts with low-performing schools to spend their critical funds sending students to other marginally better schools at the expense of implementing necessary improvements. It also requires districts to provide tutoring services of such uneven quality that they fail to help schools improve.¹⁶ Eventually, the law requires districts to restructure schools but provides little guidance or support for doing so successfully.
- **Students will have many teachers who are not effective at helping them learn.** NCLB in its current state requires new teachers to obtain a degree and minimum credentials to teach—credentials that are rarely rigorous or linked to effectiveness in the classroom.¹⁷ But it fails to identify or reward teachers who get real results for students. As a result, current law treats teachers like factory-produced widgets and gives them very little incentive to improve.¹⁸
- **Some students will be denied their fair share of resources and will continue to get the worst teachers.** Federal law is designed to ensure schools with high concentrations of low-income students get extra resources since they have extra challenges. But a loophole in the law allows districts to shortchange poor

schools by giving them fewer funds than more affluent schools. And reams of data confirm the long-held suspicion that low-income students and students of color are routinely taught by less-knowledgeable and less-effective teachers.¹⁹

- **The status quo will reign.** Conservatives who embrace the cut-and-run strategy assume states and districts know exactly how to turn around low-performing schools, if only they had less federal money or fewer requirements to do it. But that idea runs contrary to fact when only 41 percent of fourth graders read at grade level, and only 69 percent of students graduate on time.²⁰ Honest officials in state and district agencies will readily admit that chronic underperformance is a tough nut to crack without significant resources and policies to support it.

In the following pages, we outline our specific policy proposals in brief. We also point readers to more detailed work we have published on each proposal in Appendix B. Our recommendations come from years of careful examination of what is needed to improve America's schools, particularly for low-income and minority students. We do not pretend our recommendations are perfect, but we believe strongly they are critical steps for moving our nation's schools forward into a future in which they can drive our economic and social prosperity for a new millennium.

Focus on results

Hold *all* schools accountable for *all* students

Congress made investments in education for far too long without documenting or demanding results in terms of better student achievement. The nation cannot afford to provide resources to schools without requiring serious improvement in student outcomes, when the economic and social costs of poor education are so high. The next version of ESEA should hold all schools accountable for making measurable and significant progress in student learning, graduation rates, and the extent to which students leave school prepared for college and the workplace. To be sure, accountability works best when it is shared by all parties who play a role in educating students including schools, districts, and states. And the best accountability systems both recognize success and provide consequences and support to those schools and districts in need of improvement.

Recommendation #1

Require states to set high standards and annual goals for all students

The best accountability systems work backward from the end goal—ensuring all students graduate high school prepared to succeed in college or the workplace. To that end, ESEA should require states to create or adopt college- and career-ready standards. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways. To date, 42 states and the District of Columbia have voluntarily agreed to implement the Common Core standards,²¹ and Congress may want to incentivize other states to adopt them as well—as the Department of Education did through Race to the Top.

To ensure students reach such high standards, Congress should require states to set an ultimate deadline for getting all students to the standard. Each year leading up to the deadline, states should set quantifiable goals for all students, to demonstrate whether or not their students are on track to graduate college and are career ready. Lastly, since widespread achievement gaps persist, states should also set yearly goals for closing achievement gaps and graduation rate gaps, with the end result that low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, and students learning English reach the same high standards that other students do.

Recommendation #2

Require states to test students annually and publicly report data for all students

For all its flaws, NCLB took a positive step forward in requiring the collection and public reporting of achievement data for all groups of students. That action highlighted both the successes and failures of our nation's schools to get results for students, and it created positive pressure to redress achievement gaps. The next version of ESEA should continue the annual testing of students on college- and career-ready standards in grades 3-8 and in high school. And it should continue to report data publicly—including participation rates, attendance rates, student achievement results, and graduation rates—for all students, as well as subgroups of students.

Ensure assessments accurately, objectively, and fairly measure student learning

Some state assessments measure only basic skills—not the range of skills for college and career readiness—and do not accurately capture how students have grown over time. Such tests provide little helpful information about student achievement or teacher impact when used for accountability purposes. This is a negative outcome of accountability systems and the basis on which many criticize NCLB for narrowing the curriculum and encouraging educators to teach to the test.

Instead, we recommend that states test students in such a way that allows them to broadly but objectively measure the growth of individual students and cohorts of students from year to year, so schools and teachers can identify how students learn rigorous content and improve over time. Therefore, Congress may need to invest in next-generation assessments, such as those currently being developed through the Race to the Top Assessment Program funded by the Department of Education.²²

Recommendation #3

Identify low-performing schools and intervene so they improve

Measuring and reporting student data is not sufficient to improve our nation's schools. Congress should take several steps to ensure schools act on that data to boost student outcomes.

First, successful schools should be rewarded when all students, including subgroups of students, reach high standards. Secondly, low-performing schools should be identified and categorized based on the depth of their problems. Schools that barely miss their annual goal or miss it for one group of students are clearly different from

schools far below the mark or with poor results for all groups of students. Third, low-performing schools should face a series of consequences and receive a variety of supports depending on their category of underperformance. Schools might receive more flexibility depending on their category, but the very lowest-performing schools should be required to implement substantial turnaround strategies, with the oversight and help of the state and district.

Congress should not dictate every detail of school improvement. But it should guard against the understandable temptation of states to set the bar low, as some have done in the past. Therefore, a new ESEA should require specific, consequential action by states, districts, and schools to improve the results they are getting with students.

Build school talent

Improve the effectiveness of teachers and principals

Effective teachers are critical to raising achievement and closing longstanding gaps between student subgroups such as low-income students and students of color. Therefore, we must ensure that all students have the strong teachers that they need and deserve if our nation is to remain a global economic leader. The reauthorization of ESEA offers an important opportunity to improve teacher and principal effectiveness. To make greater use of ESEA as a lever for reform, Congress should maintain formula funding focused on teachers and principals, while increasing competitive funding programs that support promising reforms. We also believe that federal funding should be used more strategically and ensure that all students have access to effective teachers.

Recommendation #1

Authorize a Teacher and Leader Innovation Fund that supports innovative strategies to recruit, retain, and reward effective teachers and principals

A new Teacher and Leader Innovation Fund, or TLIF, would award grants to states and school districts to support innovative strategies that attract and support effective teachers and principals in high-need schools. States or districts could use the funds to develop more aggressive recruitment strategies, strengthen tenure processes, institute career ladders for teachers, and reward success, among other reforms. Under TLIF, states or districts should be required to demonstrate that the activities are increasing educator effectiveness. Given the program's importance, TLIF should be made the new Part A of Title II of ESEA. State Teacher Quality Grants would become Part B.

Recommendation #2

Create a Teacher and Leader Pathways program that focuses on preparing effective educators for high-need schools

A Teacher and Leader Pathways program would consolidate a number of existing recruitment and preparation programs into a larger program focused on preparing educators for high-need schools. The program would focus on teacher and principal preparation and provide competitive grants to districts as well as nonprofit and university partners. Programs would be designed to meet the specific needs of districts. And the programs must commit to tracking and measuring the effectiveness of graduates in the classroom.

Recommendation #3

Require states to develop teacher and principal evaluation systems and ensure the equitable distribution of strong teachers

Congress should require that states create new evaluation frameworks for both teachers and principals. For teachers, the evaluation system should be in use no later than five years after ESEA reauthorization. The new teacher evaluation systems must include measures of teacher impact on student growth as a substantial factor in the evaluation. Another significant part of the teacher evaluation process should be rigorous observations of their practices in classrooms. Evaluations should differentiate teachers into at least four groups of performance, with states determining the names of the categories and their precise cut-off points.

Once a state has a new teacher evaluation system in place, it should use the results to inform critical human resources decisions, including tenure, compensation, professional development, as well as to hold teacher preparation programs accountable for the performance of their graduates. The data should also be used to identify and to redress inequities within districts based on factors of race and poverty. If a district has not significantly narrowed gaps in teacher effectiveness between schools over time, they should lose part, or eventually all, of their ESEA Title II funds. Until stronger evaluations systems are online, Congress should require states to create a Teacher Quality Index that would identify inequity and guide action to fix it.²³

Similarly, principal evaluation systems need to be introduced, and should be in use no later than four years after ESEA reauthorization. Districts could create their own evaluation systems as long as they followed guidelines set by the state. State

guidelines should include a measure of schoolwide academic growth as well as research-based rubrics that assess whether principals are taking the actions they need to improve student learning and teacher practice.²⁴

We recommend Congress amend Title II of ESEA to require all states to develop comprehensive teacher and principal evaluation systems, similar to what is outlined in the Securing Teacher Effectiveness, Leaders, Learning, And Results, or STELLAR, Act of 2011. The STELLAR Act is sponsored by Sens. Joseph Lieberman (I-CT), Scott Brown (R-MA), and Mary Landrieu (D-LA) and Reps. Susan Davis (D-CA) and Jared Polis (D-CO).

Recommendation #4

Boost state capacity and consolidate programs

Federal education funding should advance equity and excellence in education. To make the greatest use of ESEA dollars, Congress should continue to support formula-based programs while boosting competitive funding for programs that encourage reform. In order to boost capacity, states should retain an additional 2.5 percent of Teacher Quality funds so that they can develop and implement improved evaluation systems.

At the same time, there are a number of programs within Title II of ESEA that are too small to have much of an impact. They should be consolidated to better leverage the funds. Like the Obama administration, we propose eliminating or consolidating a number of these programs to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our federal education spending while ensuring those funds are spent fairly to improve the educations of all of our children.²⁵

Maximize the money

Make school funding more fair and efficient

Title I, Part A of ESEA is the largest program operated by the U.S. Department of Education. For Fiscal Year 2011, Congress appropriated \$14.46 billion for Title I. The program reaches 95 percent of school districts nationwide. Over time, Title I's goal has evolved to ensure an equitable education for disadvantaged students and to bolster economic competitiveness by promoting higher academic achievement. Yet, Title I has some glaring problems. Due to cumbersome allocation formulas some states and districts receive a disproportionate amount of money, while others do not receive their fair share. Overly burdensome rules discourage states and districts from using federal money in comprehensive or innovative ways. And, a loophole in the law allows districts to skirt important equity requirements, the very purpose of Title I.

Recommendation #1

Close the comparability loophole

Require districts to show Title I schools receive comparable dollars

Under current law districts must ensure that schools receiving Title I funds and those not receiving Title I funds have comparable resources before federal funds are added, a requirement known as comparability. But districts may comply with the comparability requirement in ways that mask inequity, such as adopting a district-wide salary schedule, showing equivalent student/staff ratios, or reporting average (not actual) teacher salaries. These loopholes result in inequity. Experienced teachers, who are paid more, for example, tend to transfer to low-poverty schools, so the actual dollars going to high-poverty schools are far less than wealthier schools.²⁶

We recommend amending Title I to require comparability using actual per pupil expenditures, such as that outlined in the Fiscal Fairness Act of 2011 sponsored by Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-PA) and Sens. Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Thad Cochran (R-MS).

Require districts to report per-pupil expenditures for each school

Reporting actual per-pupil expenditures would have two main benefits.²⁷ First, it would allow for greater transparency and more rigorous financial oversight. Secondly, it would give district officials a clearer picture of spending and, thus, flexibility in making budget decisions. We believe per pupil expenditure reporting should be part of an augmented comparability provision during a three-year phase-in period, as outlined in the Fiscal Fairness Act.

Ensure districts use smart incentives to demonstrate comparability

Districts may need assistance from the states to comply with comparability requirements, including direct technical assistance or access to an information clearinghouse. Some districts may be tempted to force teachers to change schools. This would be counterproductive. Instead, districts should empower schools to use state and local funds to take actions such as:

- Offering financial incentives for experienced, effective teachers to transfer to Title I schools
- Hiring master and mentor teachers to work with new teachers and those needing to strengthen their practice
- Offering retention bonuses for effective teachers to remain in, rather than transferring out of, Title I schools
- Selectively reducing class sizes in conjunction with other strategies to support less experienced teachers so they remain and succeed in Title I schools

Recommendation #2

Streamline the Supplement not Supplant requirement

Federal funds such as Title I are meant to give schools extra support. So states and districts are required to show that their federal dollars purchase *supplemental* services, staff, or programs—a fiscal requirement known as supplement not supplant. In carrying out this requirement, federal regulators have required districts to show that every individual cost at the school and student level is supplemental. That has put a large administrative burden on districts to calculate costs, and some states and districts are not allowed to spend federal funds on comprehensive or innovative reforms for fear of auditors rendering them out of compliance.²⁸

A new ESEA should clarify that a district’s overall budgeting practice—not every specific school-level cost—should be Title I neutral. That is, districts should have to show that Title I schools receive all the state and local money they would other-

wise receive if they were not Title I schools. This will provide greater flexibility to districts in how they use federal funds, encourage states and districts to use federal funds in comprehensive and innovative ways, and reduce administrative burdens on districts and schools.

Recommendation #3

Simplify the Title I formula

Consolidate the four existing formulas into one fair and efficient formula

The Department of Education applies four formulas to determine Title I grants to districts: Basic, Concentration, Targeted, and Education Incentive Finance Grants. Because the formulas are needlessly complex, state agencies exhaust capacity re-calculating grants to districts that remain oblivious to the number of formulas. Therefore, we propose consolidating the four Title I formulas into one.²⁹

Our proposal uses the eligibility criteria of Targeted Grants—eligible districts must serve at least 10 low-income children representing at least 5 percent of all children served by the district. In addition, we recommend setting the minimum state allocation to a level tied to the fixed costs of operating public schools, which could benefit rural states that are often shortchanged under the current formulas. Lastly we propose that the authorized amount for each district would be the product of four factors:

- An amount of \$2,250, which puts the product in dollar terms and determines an authorized total
- A rescaled weighted-cost factor based on state and local values on the Department of Education's Comparable Wage Index
- A fiscal-effort factor using a refinement of the measure used by the current Education Finance Incentive Grant formula
- A weighted count of qualifying children, employing only the concentration-based weighting scale in the current Targeted Grant formula

The final point is important because a concentration-based weighting scheme is fair to small and large districts alike. Furthermore, because estimates of the number of qualifying children served by small districts are volatile, replacing the raw estimate with a three-year running average would make allocations to small districts more stable.

Create an implementation fund to ensure the new formula works

Changing funding formulas would be challenging to implement and some states and districts may gain funds while others do not. We recommend creating a temporary equity fund to help implement formula changes and to lessen the impact of a lower allocation. Districts would receive equity funds based on the old formulas or allocations gradually approaching higher levels due to the new formula.

Recommendation #4

Improve educational productivity

Our nation's school system has failed for too long to ensure education funding consistently promotes strong student achievement. But to remain competitive, our nation must make dramatic improvements in what we get for our school dollars.

Create a task force to develop productivity metrics and promote best practices

We recommend creating a federally appointed taskforce charged with two goals: developing productivity metrics and disseminating best practices. The taskforce should appoint an advisory committee to develop different productivity measures to ensure states and districts have the tools and capacity to evaluate the productivity of their schools and districts. Members of the advisory committee should include individuals who have experience developing such metrics. In conducting the work, the taskforce would ensure the productivity measures consider both equity and efficiency. The committee would offer a report to the public, and states could adopt the measures to evaluate the productivity of their schools and districts.

The taskforce would also highlight best practices and productivity initiatives by states and districts, including maintaining a website that provides information on how to boost productivity. In particular, the taskforce should focus on ways to encourage states and districts to move to standard accounting principles. The Department of Education should also lead through example and emphasize productivity in its own funding decisions.

Publish a database of school-level achievement and accountability data

Currently, too many districts and schools do not know precisely what they spend or what they spend money on. We believe the Department of Education should annually publish a database that includes school-level achievement and accountability data for all schools for the sake of transparency and good stewardship of tax dollars. The U.S. Department of Education currently collects large amounts of data

on school outcomes each year as part of the Title I program. These data are key to understanding how well schools perform. The Department of Education has not publically released these data, however, and Congress should direct the department to annually publish a database that includes school-level performance data.

Ensure state data systems collect productivity data

State longitudinal data systems have vastly improved the information educators and policymakers receive to make important decisions about education. Each year, the department awards competitive grants to states to develop longitudinal data systems. Congress should require that the data systems funded with federal dollars incorporate the information needed to look at cost effectiveness, including program participation.

Fix what's broken

Turn around low-performing schools

Across the country, states and districts are focusing on turning around the nation's lowest-performing schools. However, turnaround has proven difficult to do at scale. Districts introduce piecemeal reforms but too often neglect larger issues of human capital. State laws, policies, and lack of capacity prevent state education agencies from effectively managing district turnaround efforts. Systemic, sustained interventions are needed to break cycles of underperformance. Federal policy can help by supporting states and districts that commit to effective turnaround reforms.³⁰

Sen. Kay Hagan (D-NC) introduced a bill in 2011 that would provide resources and support to states and districts that agree to turn around their lowest-performing schools. That bill, the School Turnaround and Reward, or STAR, Act, would both reward schools that make progress and support schools in need of dramatic improvement.

Recommendation #1

Target funds to schools and districts ready to reform

Turnaround funds should be awarded based on need—poverty and degree of underperformance—but also on districts' and schools' capacity and willingness to change. That will ensure limited federal dollars are spent wisely. Congress should require states to award competitive grants to districts based on how districts address:

- **Human capital.** Districts should show that they have a sufficient pool of effective educators to staff low-performing schools and a comprehensive plan to recruit, retain, reward, and improve them using evaluation systems.
- **Support for reform.** Districts should demonstrate support between school management and stakeholders such as teachers unions or community partners, a history of implementing bold reforms, and a willingness to make difficult decisions.

- **Flexibility.** Districts should show that principals enjoy flexibility in staffing, scheduling, and budgeting to implement aggressive school turnaround plans.
 - **Data systems.** Districts must be able to show that they are able to use student data systems to drive decision-making and target resources at the school level.
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Recommendation #2

Ensure funds support bold, effective interventions

A turnaround program in ESEA should offer *flexibility* for schools to tailor interventions to their context and *incentives* that encourage bold reform. The decision about which strategy to use should be based upon a locally devised needs-assessment and should include one of the following:

- **Closing** the school and re-enrolling students in a higher-achieving school.
 - **Restarting** the school under the management of a charter operator, charter management organization, or an education management organization.
 - **Transforming** the school by, at least, screening staff for effectiveness using evaluation systems, replacing ineffective principals and teachers with effective ones, and developing reward systems for attracting and retaining successful educators.
 - **Employing an existing strategy** that has demonstrated success at the school or a new strategy that has demonstrated success in similar contexts. Success is defined as making at least a 10 percent increase in student achievement in one year.
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Recommendation #3

Collect and report data that informs turnaround

Data provides guidance when a school misses its goal so that problems are accurately diagnosed and addressed. Dramatic gains in *core* achievement data (e.g., test scores) may be elusive in the first two years of turnaround, but progress on *leading* indicators (e.g., attendance) should foreshadow later gains. Therefore, we recommend that districts and schools monitor and report data to ensure they are on track to boosting academic achievement significantly. Data should include:

- **Core indicators**, such as percentage of students reaching proficiency on state tests, progress toward accountability benchmarks, percentage of English language learners achieving language proficiency, graduation rates, and college enrollment rates. Data should be reported for all students and for each sub-group of students.
- **Leading indicators**, such as student and teacher attendance rates, student completion of advanced coursework, dropout and discipline rates, and distribution of teachers by performance level. Again, data should be reported for all students and for each sub-group of students.

Recommendation #4

Hold states, districts, and schools accountable

Accountability works best when it is shared by all parties who educate students. Therefore, we recommend schools, districts, and states be held accountable in the following ways:

- **School accountability.** If a turnaround school demonstrates improvement—based on core academic achievement—within three years, districts should reward the school with another two-year grant. If a school fails to demonstrate improvement in three years, states should require districts to select a new intervention model, re-tool the existing model based on a data-driven needs assessment, restart the school as a charter school, or close the school and transfer students to a higher-performing school.
- **District accountability.** States can hold districts accountable through monitoring and oversight of the turnaround plan and ensuring benchmarks are met in a timely fashion. Ultimately, a state should revoke a district's set-aside funds under the turnaround program if a majority of its schools do not make adequate progress.
- **State accountability.** Congress should require states to articulate in advance what is expected of turnaround schools in terms of reporting, meeting benchmarks, and consequences for failing to make progress. States failing to do so should lose a portion of their set-aside funds under the turnaround program. Further, states with a majority of schools failing to improve after three years should lose an additional portion of their set-aside funds until substantial improvement occurs.

Make better use of time

Expand learning time for students and teachers

Making sure all students are college- and career-ready requires more effort than the traditional American school calendar allows. On average students in the United States attend school for six-and-a-half-hours per day, 180 days per year. This is considerably less time than their counterparts in other countries, which continue to outperform students in the United States. The solution: expand learning time in our country. Expanded learning time lengthens the school day, week or year for all students by at least 300 hours. The key, however, is not just adding time but changing the way time is used so that students receive the maximum benefit. Through the reauthorization of ESEA federal policy can help scale up expanded time initiatives.

Recommendation #1

Create a competitive grant program for states and districts for expanding learning time

Creating a competitive demonstration program that provides funding for lengthening and redesigning the school calendar would support good practice and stimulate new approaches to school improvement. It would also strengthen community ties by encouraging partnerships with community organizations to help expand learning time. Funds should be targeted to states and districts that agree to expand time by at least 300 hours and redesign the schedule for all students in low-performing, high-poverty schools.

Rather than just adding time to the school calendar, schools carefully redesign the schedule, incorporating the extra time for:

- More in-depth and rigorous learning opportunities in core academic subjects such as reading, math, science, history, and civics
- More time for other subjects and enrichment activities such as music, arts, physical education, service-learning, and work-based opportunities for older students
- Increased opportunities for teachers to work together to review student achievement data, plan coursework, and improve their skills

In 2011, members of Congress reintroduced a bill that would authorize a competitive program for expanding learning time called the Time for Innovation Matters in Education, or TIME, Act. The TIME Act targets low performing high-poverty schools, providing students with the opportunities that lead to a well-rounded education and preparing them for college and the workplace in a 21st century economy. A key purpose of the TIME Act is to strengthen partnerships with traditional afterschool providers and other community organizations. The bill prioritizes schools incorporating community partnerships. The new TIME Act is sponsored by Sens. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and Reps. Mike Honda (D-CA), Donald Payne (D-NJ), and Steve Chabot (R-OH).

Recommendation #2

Amend Title IV Part B (21st Century Community Learning Centers) to allow funds to be used for expanding learning time

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program supports school-based academic and enrichment opportunities for students during nonschool hours, including after and before school, and summer programs. These programs can help address students' academic and nonacademic needs, but participation in these programs is voluntary—a significant drawback.³¹ And often low-income and disadvantaged students who are most likely to benefit from such programs are less likely to participate.³²

Expanded learning time schools, by contrast, ensure that all students in a school benefit from increased academic and enrichment opportunities by formally incorporating enrichment opportunities into the school schedule. Community partners can be helpful by building capacity to provide additional academic support and enrichment activities. In some cases, expanded learning time models can be built from existing partnerships with successful afterschool programs, by broadening services to include all students in a school.

Meet student needs

Provide wraparound services

Some students come to school with significant nonacademic challenges that interfere with their ability to learn. Such problems can include health and dental issues, social or emotional problems, low levels of parent education or involvement, or lack of before- and afterschool opportunities. Wraparound services, which include physical and mental health care, adult literacy classes for parents, and afterschool programming, formally address students' nonacademic needs and connect their services to classroom activities so student achievement improves.

As Congress moves to reauthorize ESEA, it should authorize a program to provide comprehensive "wraparound" support services that create the conditions for students to learn in the classroom.³³ Currently, two federal programs that support wraparound services—Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community Schools—have significant areas of overlap that indicate potential for consolidation.

Recommendation #1

Consolidate Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community Schools into one authorized wraparound services program

The strengths of both existing programs should be streamlined to focus on meeting the academic, physical, mental, and social needs of children and their communities while maximizing federal dollars. We recommend that a consolidated program:

- **Combine funding sources.** Current funding for both programs should be combined for competitive awards to qualified applicants.
- **Serve high-need communities.** Both programs currently serve low-income communities and an authorized program should continue to do so.
- **Coordinate services.** An authorized program should include coordination of services among community organizations.

Recommendation #2

Ensure that a consolidated program requires a planning year for grantees undertaking new initiatives

Planning is integral to the success and sustainability of wraparound services and provides grantees with information for effective implementation. Therefore, we recommend that a consolidated program include:

- A mandatory planning period to help grantees accurately assess community needs before implementing a new initiative.
- Phase 1 Planning Grants for grantees to develop a program plan for new initiatives.
- Phase 2 Implementation Grants for grantees to carry out their blueprints.
- Allowance for applicants seeking to expand an existing wraparound services initiative to apply directly for a Phase 2 Implementation Grant.

Recommendation #3

Continue to allow other federal programs to include wraparound services

Several other federal programs currently include some aspects of wraparound services. It is important to note that authorizing a consolidated wraparound services program should not prevent other programs from including wraparound services.

- Title I School Improvement Grants guidance currently allows School Improvement Grant funds to support social-emotional and community-oriented services.
- The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program provides opportunities for academic enrichment and additional family and youth development activities.

Prepare for tomorrow

Invest in innovation

American schools consistently produce students unready for the rigors of college or the workplace. Only about one third of all eighth graders are proficient in reading. Most high schools graduate little more than two-thirds of their students on time. And about one third of first-year college students require a remedial course. Clearly our current approach to education needs to be reinvented.

But ingenuity does not mean embracing every novel reform. Innovation is the process of leveraging new tools, talent, and management strategies to craft solutions that were not possible or necessary in an earlier era. Educators should have the opportunity to assess challenges, to devise smarter, more effective solutions—and then to be held accountable for the results they deliver.

Recommendation #1

Incentivize states and districts to spur innovation

Authorize the Race to the Top and Investing in Innovation funds

The Race to the Top, or RTT, and Investing in Innovation Fund, or i3, programs have spurred significant education reforms. At least 10 states changed their laws to make themselves more competitive for RTT before money was awarded, and 34 states in total reformed their education laws or policies to prepare for the first two rounds of the competition. We encourage Congress to authorize both of these competitive programs as a permanent part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or ESEA.

Expand and authorize the Teacher Incentive Fund

We urge Congress to authorize and expand the Teacher Incentive Fund into a new Teacher and Leader Innovation Fund, or TLIF. TLIF would award grants to states and school districts to support innovative strategies that attract and support effective teachers and principals in high-need schools. TLIF would consolidate existing programs that serve similar purposes, and states or districts could use the funds

to develop more aggressive recruitment strategies, strengthen pay and tenure processes, and institute career ladders for teachers, among other reforms. Under TLIF, states or districts should be required to demonstrate that the activities are increasing educator effectiveness.

Recommendation #2

Incentivize states and districts to provide flexibility in staffing and funding

Empower schools to play a greater role in staffing

Staffing decisions are usually made at the district level. The result is that principals have little, if any, freedom to recruit, hire, or retain staff, particularly in low-performing schools that teachers tend to avoid. Congress should empower school-level leaders, including teacher leaders, in chronically failing schools to make human capital decisions, such as having a jumpstart on hiring, flexibility to recruit and retain effective teachers, and resources to pay effective teachers more for working in high-need schools.

Provide districts more flexible funding options

Most districts do not allocate or report funds based on actual school-level expenditures, obscuring what resources are available for each school. Congress should require districts to report actual expenditures for each school and encourage them to move toward student-weighted funding. Both moves would give administrators greater *clarity* about the resources they have and greater *flexibility* to use them to meet student needs. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 required districts to report school-level data for that year, and we believe that should be required permanently in ESEA.

Recommendation #3

Incentivize states and districts to provide more choices in schools, programs, and access to educators

Support the planning and development of effective charter schools

The federal Charter Schools Program provides grants to states to support the planning and development of new charter schools. This funding is critical because charter schools usually receive less public funding than traditional public schools. High-flying charter models have achieved unprecedented outcomes for low-

income students, and their existence has spurred innovation. By supporting the Charter Schools Program, the federal government can send a strong signal to states and districts that reinventing school models is critical to meeting the needs of all students. The All Students Achieving through Reform, or All-STAR, Act would provide new grants in the Charter School program to replicate and expand successful charter schools. The All-STAR Act is sponsored by Reps. Jared Polis (D-CO) and Erik Paulsen (R-MN) and Sens. Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Mark Kirk (R-IL).

Break down the barrier between high school and college

The distinction between 12th grade and the first year of college is artificial, the product of historic norms that are no longer relevant to today's learners. This divide leaves some students unchallenged in high school, unready for college, or both. There is growing evidence that early college and dual-enrollment programs can strengthen the educational pipeline at a crucial junction by bridging this gap. The Fast Track to College Act of 2011, sponsored by Sen. Herb Kohl (D-WI) and Rep. Dale Kildee (D-MI), provides support for such programs and is worth consideration.

Broaden the pool of potential teachers and leaders

Teachers and principals are the most important school-based factors in student learning, which is why it is important to cast a wide net and allow the best candidates to enter the profession, whether or not they have conventional credentials. Congress should authorize a Teacher and Leader Pathways program that would consolidate a number of existing recruitment and preparation programs into a larger program focused on preparing educators for high-need schools. The program would provide competitive grants to districts as well as nonprofit and university partners. Programs would be designed to meet the specific needs of districts and must commit to tracking and measuring the effectiveness of their graduates in the classroom.

Conclusion

Following the five core principles (Five E's) of federal education policy—equity, enhancing opportunity, effectiveness, efficiency, and encouraging innovation—we believe that nothing less than bold progressive action is needed to fix NCLB. The law desperately needs reforms in the areas of teachers and principals, fair funding, school improvement, and innovation.

We recognize our approach runs contrary to many who have embraced a cut and run strategy. But we know our nation's economy and students depend upon smart investments in education innovation, targeted action to improve teachers and schools, and vigorous oversight to ensure low-income students get their fair share of resources.

Now is the time to move forward, not backward in federal education reform. The federal government cannot singlehandedly solve every educational problem. But it can leverage its role in smart, progressive ways that improve outcomes for our nation's students. Now is the time to reauthorize ESEA. We stand ready to work with Congress, when it finds the will, to reauthorize federal education law in such a bold, progressive way.

Appendix A

Summary of CAP's ESEA recommendations

Topic	Recommendations
Accountability	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Require states to set college- and career-ready standards and a deadline for all students to reach those standards.2. Require states to set annual achievement goals and gap-closing goals for all students.3. Require states to annually assess students and to publicly report that data for all students.4. Identify and categorize low-performing schools according to their degree of underperformance.5. Target interventions to low-performing schools according to their degree of underperformance and reward schools making progress for all students.
Teacher and principal effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Repurpose Title II to create two robust competitive programs that a) improve teacher and principal preparation for high-need schools and b) improve teacher and principal effectiveness.2. Require states to develop evaluation systems that measure and improve teacher and principal effectiveness. Require states to ensure all students have equal access to effective teachers.3. Consolidate duplicative and eliminate ineffective programs in Title II, and increase state funds so they can better meet their human capital needs.
Funding	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Close the Title I comparability loophole and require districts to report school-level spending data.2. Streamline the Supplement not Supplant requirement so states and districts can spend federal funds in more comprehensive and innovative ways.3. Simplify the four Title I formulas into one fair and efficient formula.4. Develop productivity metrics, promote best practices, and collect and report school-level productivity data.
School turnaround and improvement	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Target turnaround funds to districts and schools ready to change, and fund bold and effective interventions in the lowest-performing schools.2. Require states and districts to collect and report data that inform turnaround efforts.3. Hold states, districts, and schools accountable for making significant progress in the lowest-performing schools.4. Invest in expanded learning time initiatives through a competitive grant program and by allowing Title IV (21st Century Community Learning Centers) funds to be used to expand learning time.5. Invest in wraparound services through a competitive program that consolidates the Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community Schools programs.
Innovation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Authorize reform-minded competitive programs such as Race to the Top, Investing in Innovation, and the Teacher Incentive Fund.2. Provide greater autonomy and flexibility to schools in terms of budgeting, staffing, and how they use their time.3. Support the replication and expansion of successful charter schools through the Charter School Program.4. Support innovative options for high school students such as early college high schools and dual-enrollment programs.

Appendix B

CAP's body of work on ESEA topics

Improving teacher and principal effectiveness

- [Advancing Teacher and Principal Effectiveness: Four Recommendations for Reforming the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)
- [Essential Elements of Teacher Policy in ESEA: Effectiveness, Fairness, and Evaluation](#)
- [Measuring What Matters: A Stronger Accountability Model for Teacher Education](#)
- [So Long Lake Wobegon?: Using Teacher Evaluation to Raise Teacher Quality](#)
- [Treating Different Teachers Differently: How State Policy Should Act on Differences in Teacher Performance to Improve Teacher Effectiveness and Equity](#)
- [Increasing Principal Effectiveness: A Strategic Investment for ESEA](#)
- [Principals' Approaches to Developing Teacher Quality](#)

Closing the comparability loophole

- [Walking the Talk: Closing the Comparability Requirement Loophole in Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)
- [Comparable, Schmomparable: Evidence of Inequity in the Allocation of Funds for Teacher Salary Within California's Public School Districts](#)
- [Pulling Back the Curtain: Promoting Fiscal Equity and Providing All Students with Access to Effective Teachers Will Not Require Forcible Re-assignment](#)

Simplifying the Title I formula

- [Bitter Pill, Better Formula: Toward a Single, Fair, and Equitable Formula for ESEA Title I, Part A](#)
- [Spoonful of Sugar: An Equity Fund to Facilitate a Single, Fair, and Equitable Formula for ESEA Title I, Part A](#)
- [Secret Recipes Revealed: Demystifying the Title I, Part A Formulas](#)

Enhancing educational productivity

- [Return on Educational Investment A District-by-District Evaluation of U.S. Educational Productivity](#)

Turning around low-performing schools

- [Incentivizing School Turnaround: A Proposal for Reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)
- [Turning Around the Nation's Lowest-Performing Schools](#)
- [Levers for Change: Pathways for State-to-District Assistance in Underperforming School Districts](#)

Expanding learning time

- [Transforming Schools to Meet the Needs of Students: Improving School Quality and Increasing Learning Time in ESEA](#)
- [Expanded Time, Enriching Experiences: Expanded Learning Time Schools and Community Organization Partnerships](#)
- [Union and District Partnerships to Expand Learning Time](#)

Providing wraparound services

- [Maximizing the Promise of Community Schools: Streamlining Wraparound Services for ESEA](#)
- [Breaking the Mold: Combining Community Schools with Expanded Learning Time to Help Educationally Disadvantaged Students](#)
- [Promise Neighborhoods Shows Real Potential but Needs the Right Funding](#)
- [A Look at Community Schools](#)

Investing in innovation

- [Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Innovation](#)
- [Advancing Teacher and Principal Effectiveness: Four Recommendations for Reforming the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)
- [Walking the Talk: Closing the Comparability Requirement in Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#)
- [Fast Track to College: Increasing Post-secondary Success for All Students](#)

Endnotes

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